

## Interviews

**Andreas Hedrich - Director**

### **What is Play - Creative Gaming Festival?**

The Creative Gaming Festival is about hands-on experience, experimenting, exchanging information, enjoying games, inspiration and above all togetherness. PLAY is the platform for everyone who works with, develops and loves games.

The program consists of over 100 events; some program highlights are: workshops, exhibitions, international guest speakers, unique action art events and the International Creative Gaming Award. The 9<sup>th</sup> Creative Gaming Festival runs from November 2<sup>nd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup>. It transforms Hamburg into an experimental space for digital games.

### **And what is so special about the Festival?**

PLAY is important because it makes clear that digital games have nothing to do with fat dumb players; rather it is a defining culture. Games tell stories, provide impulses and stimulate creative processes. They influence cultural forms such as contemporary theater or the visual arts; and, they provide opportunities for active participation.

Games are not aliens. They have grown out of our culture. They satisfy a basic human need to play, to try things out and to slip into other roles. And the Creative Gaming Festival offers a program through which you can understand what is meant by the digital games culture. Here you can get your hands around it and try it out.

### **PLAY is almost in its 10<sup>th</sup> year. Why has the Festival survived so long and grown from year to year?**

PLAY is significant each year because it focuses on the changes that occur from year to year. Only someone who tinkers with systems and thinks beyond their boundaries can effect changes. This is only possible through a worldwide, unique, multidimensional approach. In order to be innovative and “game changing”, each year the Festival takes up a significant, socially relevant theme.

The Festival retains proven event formats and concepts such as the PLAY Show, topical exchanges between experts and interested participants and visits to development studios and educational institutions. On the other hand, new formats are continually being developed. As a result, this year workshops will be offered on three competency levels: Beginners (Level 1); Advanced Players (Level 2) and Experts (Level 3).

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## CREATIVE GAMING FESTIVAL

**Christiane Schwinge - Artistic Director**

**PLAY 16's motto is "Games and Body". What does the body have to do with digital games?**

The emphasis this year is on "Let's Get Physical – Game and Body". This intentionally reminds us of the Aerobic Movement of the 1990's; the idea is to show that the body plays a central role in the setup, action and control of games.

The very central questions are: How do computer game figures move and who moves them? What and how do physically handicapped persons play? And why do we always play sitting down? This year's theme considers physicality in and in front of games.

**And how does this influence the program? Must we all wander through virtual worlds while sitting down?**

PLAY – Creative Gaming Festival intends to give the attendees the opportunity to think about some specific topics. This will happen within the framework of what can be considered classic PLAY formats. There will be exhibitions, workshops, discussions during the PLAY Shows and interactive performances (among other events) that will help us better understand the significance of the body in digital games. What role does disability play both within and external to the game? What does my body do in the virtual world and how do real bodies get inserted into games (Motion Capturing)? These are just some of the questions that are in focus this year.

**People who are involved in education and digital game development come together at PLAY. What are the important topics this year?**

2016 is the year of Virtual Reality (VR). At the PLAY Conference, international subject matter experts will explore the potential and challenges that the three-dimensional space experience creates. In addition to VR, Motion Capture will be a major theme. Andreas Rauscher (Christian-Albrechts-University Kiel) will examine the development of physicality in digital games in his workshop. Sandro Engel and Amelie Künzel (Urban Invention) will present experimental control techniques to the attendees. And, Stephan Schölzel's (infocafe Neu-Isenberg) presentation is concerned with the depiction of gender in games and with recommendations and suggestions for media pedagogic projects.

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## CREATIVE GAMING FESTIVAL

**Vera Marie Rodewald - Artistic Director**

**What highlights can visitors to this year's PLAY – Creative Gaming Festival expect; what type and how many visitors do you anticipate?**

Several, as for example the best-known Hamburg game brains in the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Uke Bosse as moderator, the President of the Federal Center for Political Education, digital games in the Hamburg City Hall, a VR laboratory in the Central Library, an interactive theater in the Gängeviertel, a focus on theater on Festival Saturday, Family Day on Sunday and the Creative Gaming Award ceremony in the City Hall conducted by the City Assembly President.

PLAY is a festival for doers, players, visionaries and for innovative thinkers. But, PLAY is also a place for all those who are curious and who still ask, what is so fascinating about games. Teachers can become acquainted with games as a new technique to be used in the learning process. Young people can discover how to become programmers themselves. Students can come to the realization that games are not just a science unto itself. And finally, PLAY addresses people who love culture.

This year we are expecting around 7,000 visitors. Based on the distribution of previous years, that breaks down to approximately 1,500 school children, 600 teachers, 1,200 students and 1,500 game professionals.

**The Festival takes place in locations that are established Hamburg cultural centers. What significance does that have for the Festival?**

PLAY is at home where culture becomes visible. The primary locations are the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, the Kunsthaus Hamburg and the Central Library. These three locations form a magic triangle for the digital games culture. Other locations are to be found in the city center: theHaus 73, the City Hall, Bigpoint and the Gängeviertel.

**You are always talking about education; but, games are really about having fun. How do these two ideas fit together?**

Games are above all an experimental space. As a player, you can slip into other roles, penetrate other worlds and move beyond the boundaries of reality. You can view things from a different side by changing your perspective and you can structure the experience space yourself. This is an important engine in the educational process. The motto of Creative Gaming is "Playing with Games"; this means to experience how you can change, manipulate, create and further develop digital games. The role of digital games is taken into account especially in the fields of education, science, society and culture.